

South-South Cooperation Principles: An Essential Element in South-South Cooperation

Developing countries today face the multiple interlinked financial, climate, and development crises. As the development gap between rich and poor countries grows and inequality deepens, never before has South-South cooperation at all levels been more essential at all levels and in all fields of international and domestic endeavour as developing countries seek, individually and collectively, to meet current global challenges together with developed countries.

South-South cooperation in the overall context of multilateralism is a continuing process vital to confront the challenges faced by the South. It is a valuable contribution to development, and as such needs to be strengthened, including through enhancing the capacities of the institutions and the arrangements that promote such cooperation. South-South cooperation is essential as a strategy to sustain the development efforts of developing countries and a means of enhancing their participation in the emerging global economy.

South-South cooperation is the responsibility of the South. It lays the foundation for an effective and productive engagement on an equal footing by the countries of the South with the North. The development assistance of developed countries should be premised on and be consistent with a strong foundation of South-South cooperation. Such an engagement is necessary in order for the global community as a whole to be able to address global challenges and crises in a coordinated, collaborative and effective way.

South-South cooperation can take many forms.¹ In this regard, many institutions have been set up to promote South-South cooperation at various levels, both within

multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and by developing countries themselves through their regional organizations and their multilateral institutions such as the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the South Centre.

In this context, the Havana Programme of Action, the Marrakech Plan of Implementation of South-South Cooperation and the Doha Plan of Action taken together represent a comprehensive framework for intensified cooperation among developing countries.

To participate effectively in shaping multilateral rules and relationships to the mutual benefit of all countries, South-South policy coordination at the international level is essential. Common South-South approaches and positions that are premised on common development-oriented perspectives and concerns, while at the same time respecting the varied and heterogeneous development experiences of developing countries, are essential in shaping the conditions under which development support from developed countries and international agencies can become more effective.

Such South-South policy coordination is needed in ensuring that global economic and political relations is based on a relationship of equality and cooperation among the countries of the South and of the North. In particular, such policy coordination will be instrumental in shaping the direction and content of, among other things:

- the current climate change negotiations,
- the global response to the financial crisis,
- the achievement of development goals,
- international trade negotiations, and
- intellectual property discussions.

In this regard, principles which govern and guide South-South cooperation, including at the policy level, have already been articulated by the South and should be observed and promoted.

¹ The UN Secretary-General's 2009 report on South-South cooperation provides an excellent overview of the range and breadth of South-South cooperation activities. See UN, *Promotion of South-South cooperation for development: a thirty-year perspective – Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. No. A/64/504, 27 October 2009.



South-South Cooperation Principles *

- a. South-South cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives and solidarity;
- b. South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South;
- c. South-South cooperation must not be seen as a replacement for North-South cooperation. Strengthening South-South cooperation must not be a measure of coping with the receding interest of the developed world in assisting developing countries;
- d. Cooperation between countries of the South must not be analyzed and evaluated using the same standards as those used for North-South relations;
- e. Financial contributions from other developing countries should not be seen as Official Development Assistance from these countries to other countries of the South. These are merely expressions of solidarity and cooperation borne out of shared experiences and sympathies;
- f. South-South cooperation is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations. South-South cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion;
- g. South-South cooperation is based on a strong, genuine, broad-based partnership and solidarity;
- h. South-South cooperation is based on complete equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit;
- i. South-South cooperation respects national sovereignty in the context of shared responsibility;
- j. South-South cooperation strives for strengthened multilateralism in the promotion of an action-oriented approach to development challenges;
- k. South-South cooperation promotes the exchange of best practices and support among developing countries in the common pursuit of their broad development objectives (encompassing all aspects of international relations and not just in the traditional economic and technical areas);
- l. South-South cooperation is based on the collective self-reliance of developing countries;
- m. South-South cooperation seeks to enable developing countries to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development;
- n. The modalities and mechanisms for promoting South-South cooperation are based on bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional cooperation and integration as well as multilateral cooperation.

* As reaffirmed in the Ministerial Declaration of the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China, 25 September 2009, New York, USA (see <http://www.g77.org/doc/Declaration2009.htm>, para. 70), based on the South-South cooperation principles recommended by the Twelfth Session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (IFCC-XII), 10-13 June 2008, Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, and adopted in the Ministerial Declaration of the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China, 26 September 2008, New York, USA (see <http://www.g77.org/doc/Declaration2008.htm>, para. 65).